
Collection Summary

Creator: Costanza, Margaret, 1932

Title: Midge Costanza Papers

Dates: 1975-1981

Quantity: 33 linear feet, 8 linear inches; 77 Containers

Identification:
   Accession Number: 16-03.a
   National Archives Identifier: 76089502

Scope and Content:
The material in this collection consists of memorandums, correspondence, schedules, invitations, reports, press clippings, published articles and materials, speeches, handwritten notes, telephone messages, and background working materials. These materials relate to Midge Costanza’s role as Assistant to the President for Public Liaison, and document her outreach activities concerning minority communities including women, LGBT, African Americans as well as religious and ethnic groups. Also included are materials from her role as Co-Chairman of the 1976 Carter/Mondale Campaign in New York; material relating to International Women’s Year meetings; and reorganization of the Executive Office of the President, specifically the restructuring of the Public Liaison Office.

Creator Information: Midge Costanza

Midge Costanza was born on November 28, 1932 in LeRoy, New York and was raised in Rochester, New York. She began her political career as a volunteer for W. Averell Harriman’s gubernatorial campaign in 1954; she later served as executive director of Robert F. Kennedy’s 1964 Senate campaign. She served as a Democratic National Committee member from 1972 until 1977. Costanza became an outspoken advocate for LGBT rights and, in 1973, became the first woman elected to the Rochester (N.Y.) City Council. She then served as vice mayor of the city from 1974 to 1977.

She lost a race for the United States House of Representatives in 1974 to the popular Republican incumbent. In 1976, when Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter ran for President
of the United States, Costanza served as co-chair of his New York campaign operation and gave a seconding speech for him at the Democratic National Convention.

Upon Jimmy Carter's election, Costanza was named Assistant to the President for Public Liaison, moving into the office next door to the Oval Office. Costanza was nicknamed "the President's window to the nation", consulting with a wide array of groups.

She invited members of the National Gay Task Force to the White House during Anita Bryant’s controversial Save Our Children campaign. She also hosted a group of 30 women in protest of the president’s opposition to federal abortion funding. She was featured on the cover of Newsweek with the headline “Woman in the White House.”

After resigning from her White House post, she coached political candidates in public speaking and worked to get Barbara Boxer elected to the Senate in 1992. California Governor Gray Davis appointed Costanza as a special liaison to women’s groups, a position she held until 2003.

She was a professor at San Diego State University, where she worked with the political science and women’s studies departments. She created the Midge Costanza Institute at the University of California at San Diego to help young people engage in political and social activism.

Costanza was also active with an AIDS research organization and fought for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. She worked tirelessly to elect more women to public office. In 2005, she joined the San Diego district attorney’s office as public affairs officer focused on the prevention of elder abuse.

In 2011, she was inducted into the San Diego County Women’s Hall of Fame at the Women’s Museum of California.

Midge Costanza died on March 23, 2010 at the age of 77.

Restrictions:
Restrictions on Access: These papers contain documents restricted in accordance with applicable executive order(s), which governs National Security policies, applicable statutes/agency restrictions, and material which has been closed in accordance with the donor’s deed of gift.

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Related Material:
Related materials in this repository: White House Office of Public Liaison Files

Related materials in other repository: Midge Costanza Institute at the University of California at San Diego
Separated material: Photographs transferred to Audio Visual Department

**Index Terms:**
- Limited to major topics under each category
- Persons: Midge Costanza; Jane Wales;

Organizations: National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL); National Advisory Committee on Women (NACW); National Gay Task Force (NGTF); Democratic National Committee (DNC); National Organization for Women (NOW); National Women’s Political Caucus (NWPC)

Subjects: Women, gay rights, equal rights amendment; domestic violence; abortion; employment; neighborhoods; urban policy; Christians

Places: Rochester, New York; Monroe County, New York

Types of Material: Memorandums, correspondence, schedules, invitations, reports, press clippings, published articles and materials, speeches, handwritten notes, telephone messages, and background working materials.

**Administrative Information:**
- Preferred citation: [Type of Document], [Names of Sender and Recipient or Title of Document], [Date], [Collection Title], [Series Title], [Folder Title], [Box Number], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library.

- Acquisition information: These donated historical materials were received under provisions of the instrument of gift that Doreen Mattingly signed on May 11, 2016.

- Processing information: The collection was opened in June, 2019.

**System of Arrangement:**

The records of the Midge Costanza Papers are divided into eight series:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series Title</th>
<th>National Archives Identifier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midge Costanza’s Subject Files</td>
<td>76089503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midge Costanza’s Correspondence Files</td>
<td>140093725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midge Costanza’s Scheduling Files</td>
<td>140093727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midge Costanza’s Office of Public Liaison Files</td>
<td>140093728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midge Costanza’s Invitation Files</td>
<td>140093730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midge Costanza’s International Women’s Year Files</td>
<td>140093738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midge Costanza’s Women’s Issues Files</td>
<td>140093745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midge Costanza’s 1976 Campaign Files</td>
<td>140093753</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Detailed Description of the Collection

**Midge Costanza’s Subject Files**
Scope and Content: Containers 1-28. This series was opened in June 2019. The series consists of memorandums, correspondence, reports, schedules, resumes, meeting minutes, press clippings, speeches, handwritten notes, detailed telephone messages, and background working materials. The material relates to Midge Costanza’s outreach efforts towards minority groups, mainly women, and other groups concerning controversial issues such as abortion, passage of the equal rights amendment, battered women, child care, gay rights, and ethnic neighborhoods. Also included are documents and letters detailing her resignation, White House reorganization efforts, and minutes of Cabinet and White House staff meetings. Arranged alphabetically by subject.

**Midge Costanza’s Correspondence Files**
Scope and Content: Containers 29-39. This series was opened in June 2019. The series consists of correspondence concerning a wide variety of topics such as the equal rights amendment, gay rights, abortion, women and employment, health care, the environment, nuclear energy, and amnesty for draft dodgers. Also included is general correspondence such as support and thank you letters, “angry” letters, random mail, and personal requests. Arranged chronologically or by subject.

**Midge Costanza’s Scheduling Files**
Scope and Content: Containers 40-51. This series was opened in June 2019. The series contains a voluminous amount of Midge Costanza’s scheduling requests including staff meetings, travel events, White House tours, White House meetings with special groups, and other miscellaneous events. The schedules often include to and from correspondence, background briefings and information on specific groups, and travel information. Arranged chronologically.

**Midge Costanza’s Office of Public Liaison Files**
Scope and Content: Containers 52-54. This series was opened in June 2019. The series consists of specific information relating to the functions of the Public Liaison Office such as daily activity calendars, staff meeting summaries and accomplishments, weekly reports, and memorandums. The series also contains documents relating to the White House reorganization of this office that subsequently resulted in Midge Costanza’s resignation. Arranged alphabetically by subject.

**Midge Costanza’s Invitation Files**
Scope and Content: Containers 55-61. This series was opened in June 2019. The series consists of invitations for speaking engagements, local community events both inside and outside of the D.C. area, political fundraising events, and personal invitations such as dinners, birthday celebrations, and weddings. The series also contains regretted invitations. Arranged chronologically.

**Midge Costanza’s International Women’s Year Files**
Scope and Content: Containers 62-66. This series was opened in June 2019. The series consists of correspondence, memorandums, notes, reports, press releases, members list, and printed publications. The material relates to the Carter Administration records on women appointments.
to the White House, schedule of events, various state reports, and the future implementation of stated resolutions on women’s issues. Arranged alphabetically by subject.

**Midge Costanza’s Women’s Issues Files**  
Scope and Content: Containers 67-74. This series was opened in June 2019. The series consists of correspondence, memos, reports, notes, and background information. The material relates to specific women’s issues such as affirmative action, discrimination in employment, federal women employment, female presidential appointments, housewives rights, women owned businesses, and women in the arts. Also included is material from women’s groups such as the National Advisory Committee on Women (NACW) and the Interdepartmental Task Force on Women. Arranged alphabetically by subject.

**Midge Costanza’s 1976 Campaign Files**  
Scope and Content: Containers 75-77. This series was opened in June 2019. The series consists of campaign schedules, speeches, press articles correspondence, and memorandums. The material relates to Midge Costanza’s role as co-chairman of the Carter/Mondale presidential campaign for the state of New York. Materials include lists of members committees and delegates, state issues, budgets, plans, organizational files, and fundraising. Arranged alphabetically by subject.
Container List

Midge Costanza’s Subject Files

Container 1
Abortion
Abortion - Campaign
Abortion - Letters to Midge Costanza
Abortion - National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL)
Abortion - Press Conference
Abortion - Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights
Abortion - Reports
Academia - Universities
Administration Information - Press Kits
African Americans [1]
African Americans [2]
Agriculture
Arts - Museums
Asian Americans
B-1 Bomber

Container 2
Barbara Walters - Interview, Negative and Positive Responses
Bureaucracy
Business
Business Associations - Meetings
Cabinet Meetings, 1/77-2/77
Cabinet Meetings, 3/77
Cabinet Meetings, 4/77
Cabinet Meetings, 5/77
Cabinet Meetings, 6/77

Container 3
Cabinet Meetings, 7/77
Cabinet Meetings, 8/77
Cabinet Meetings, 9/77
Cabinet Meetings, 10/77
Cabinet Meetings, 11/77
Cabinet Meetings, 12/77
Cabinet Meetings, 1978

Container 4
Carter Administration - First Year Accomplishments and Actions
Child Abuse
Churches
Civil Service Awards, 6/7/77
Conference on Women and Technology, 3/6-8/81

Midge Costanza Papers
Consumers
Correspondence to Midge - Political Figures
Counties/Cities
Crime and Punishment
Democratic National Committee (DNC)
DNC, 1978
DNC - Analysis of Political Attitudes in U.S., 1/77

Container 5
Democratic National Convention - Costanza’s Seconding Speech Drafts
Democratic National Convention - Delegates and Alternates
Democratic National Convention - Female Delegates, Notes, Lists
Democratic National Convention - Miscellaneous Memos, Schedules, Instructions
Democratic National Convention - Nominating Speech Letters
Democratic National Convention - Party Platforms
Democratic National Convention - Publications
Disarmament
Domestic Violence - Battered Women
Domestic Violence - Booklets, Publications
Domestic Violence - Legislation
Drug Policy Message - Peter Bourne
Economy, Taxes, Business I [1]

Container 6
Economy, Taxes, Business I [2]
Economy, Taxes, Business II [1]
Economy, Taxes, Business II [2]
Education - Youth [1]
Education - Youth [2]
Election, 1978
Employee Inquiries
Energy [1]

Container 7
Energy [2]
Energy - A Bill to Establish National Energy Policy
Energy - Macro Economic Effect of Policy
Energy - The National Energy Plan
Environment
Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) - Anti
ERA - Boycott
ERA - Dear Abbey
ERA - Extension
ERA - Illinois

Container 8
ERA - Miscellaneous
ERA - Pro Letters
ERA - Rally, 7/9/78
ERA - Roll Call - Votes
ERA - Speeches
ERA - State Issues
ERA - State Lobbying
ERA - Tina Turner and Tom Jones Benefit Concert, 9/11/78
Ethnic Affairs
Family Policy
Federal Paperwork Reduction
Filipino Issues
Foreign Policy - Questions and Answers, 4/78-5/78

Container 9
Foreign Policy - Questions and Answers, 7/78
Fundraiser - Campaign Debt
Fundraisers - Congressional
Fundraising
Fundraising - Campaign Expenses, 1974
Fundraising - Federal Election Commission (FEC) Investigations and Reports, 1977
Fundraising - Payroll Sheets, Expenses, Personnel - Costanza for Congress, 1975

Container 10
Gay Rights - Civil Service Reform
Gay Rights - Correspondence
Gay Rights - Dade County, Florida
Gay Rights - Immigration
Gay Rights - LGBT States and Local Organizations
Gay Rights - Miscellaneous
Gay Rights - National Gay Task Force (NGTF)
Gays - 1976 Campaign
Gays - 1980 Campaign
Gays - NGTF and the Bureau of Prisons
Gays - NGTF Meeting with the Surgeon General
Gays - NGTF Meetings
Gays - Week
Handguns
Handicapped - Disabled
Health [1]
Health [2]
Health, Education and Welfare (HEW)

Container 11
Housing
Human Rights
Inaugural Correspondence
Inaugural Invitations
Inaugural Special Invitations and General
International Affairs [1]
International Affairs [2]
International Issues [1]
International Issues [2]

**Container 12**
International Issues - Nureyeu Family Unification
International Issues - Secretary of State Statements
Italian Americans
Jewish Affairs
Jody Powell
Labor - Employment [1]
Labor - Employment [2]

**Container 13**
Latinos
Legal
Legislative
Letters to Midge - Pro and Con
Lobbying
Mail, 3/77-11/77
Mail, 12/77-7/78
Mail Duplicates
Medal of Freedom Award
Media [1]

**Container 14**
Media [2]
Media - Interviews - Transcripts
Military - B-1 Bomber and F-18 Procurement, Neutron Bomb
Minority Business
National Association of Counties (NACO)
Native Americans [1]
Native Americans [2]
Neighborhoods I [1]
Neighborhoods I [2]

**Container 15**
Neighborhoods - Urban II [1]
Neighborhoods - Urban II [2]
Neighborhoods - Urban III [1]
Neighborhoods - Urban III [2]
Neighborhoods and Urban Policy Overall Management Plans - Midge Costanza
New York State [1]
New York State [2]

Container 16
New York State [3]
Notes, Memos, Messages, n.d.
Panama Canal
Panama Canal - White House Briefing
Payroll
Photographs
Polls - Roper Center and DNC, 6/77-10/77
Poverty
President's 1978 Agenda
President's Schedule, 1/77-2/77
President's Schedule, 3/77-4/77
President's Schedule, 5/77-6/77
President's Schedule, 7/77-8/77

Container 17
President's Schedule, 9/77-10/77
President's Schedule, 11/77
President's Schedule, 12/77
President's Schedule, 1/78-3/78
President's Schedule, 4/78-5/78
President's Schedule, 7/78-9/78
President's Speech, 3/77
President's Speeches, Remarks, Press Conferences - State of the Union, 1/78
Press Releases and News Conferences, 1/77-6/77
Press Releases and News Conferences, 1/78-2/78
Press Releases and News Conferences, 6/78-7/78

Container 18
Public Participation - People Program
Resignation Documents - Midge Costanza
Resignation - Feedback Letters [1]
Resignation - Feedback Letters [2]
Resignation - Feedback Letters [3]
Resignation - Letter to Vice President
Resignation - LGBT
Resignation - Press Articles
Resignation - Response Letters to Feedback from Midge Costanza

Container 19
Resumes - A-B
Resumes - C
Resumes - D-E
Resumes - F-G
Resumes - H
Resumes - J-K

**Container 20**
Resumes - L
Resumes - M [1]
Resumes - M [2]
Resumes - N-P
Resumes - R
Resumes - S [1]
Resumes - S [2]
Resumes - T

**Container 21**
Resumes - U-Z
Rochester, New York [1]
Rochester, New York [2]
Roosevelt, Eleanor - Memorial Park
Rosalynn Carter
Safety Council
Seniors
Science
Security Violation
Speeches - Midge Costanza, 1/77-6/77
Speeches - Midge Costanza, 8/77-9/77

**Container 22**
Speeches - Midge Costanza, 10/77-11/77
Speeches - Midge Costanza, 1/78-12/78
Speeches - Midge Costanza, Panama Canal
Speeches - Midge Costanza, Undated or Duplicated
Speeches - Midge Costanza, U.S. Policy towards Africa
States
Strategic Arms Limitation Talks II (SALT II)
Telephone Directory
Telephone Messages, 1/77

**Container 23**
Telephone Messages, 2/77
Telephone Messages, 3/77
Telephone Messages, 4/77
Telephone Messages, 5/77
Telephone Messages, 6/77
Telephone Messages, 7/77
Telephone Messages, 8/77

Midge Costanza Papers
Container 24
Telephone Messages, 9/77
Telephone Messages, 10/77
Telephone Messages, 11/77
Telephone Messages - Status of, 11/77
Telephone Messages, 12/77
Telephone Messages, 1/78
Telephone Messages, 1/78-2/78
Telephone Messages - Status of, 2/78

Container 25
Telephone Messages, 3/78
Telephone Messages - Status of, 3/78
Telephone Messages, 4/78
Telephone Messages - Status of, 4/78
Telephone Messages, 5/78
Telephone Messages - Status of, 5/78
Telephone Messages, 6/78
Telephone Messages - Status of, 6/78
Telephone Messages, 7/78

Container 26
Telephone Messages, 8/78
Telephone Messages, 9/78
Telephone Messages and Notes, n.d.
Title X
Topics - Miscellaneous
Transportation
Tree Lighting Ceremony
Vespa, John
Veterans
Veterans - Amnesty
Veterans - MIA Issues
Volunteers
Voter Registration
Weapons - Peace - Defense

Container 27
Weekly Event Calendars with Background Information, 8/78-12/78
White House Reorganization, n.d.
White House Reorganization, 2/77-3/77
White House Reorganization, 4/77
White House Reorganization, 5/77
White House Reorganization, 6/77
White House Reorganization, 7/77-12/77
White House Staff Memos, n.d.

Midge Costanza Papers
White House Staff Memos, 1977
White House Staff Memos, 1978

**Container 28**
White House Staff Memos - Miscellaneous [1]
White House Staff Memos - Miscellaneous [2]
White House Study Project
Women - Susan B. Anthony Coin
World Hunger
Zero Based Budgeting - Booz, Hamilton, and Allen Inc. Consulting Services

[Midge Costanza’s Correspondence Files](#)

**Chronological:**

**Container 29**
1/77-2/77
3/77
4/77
5/77 [1]
5/77 [2]
5/77 [3]
5/77 [4]

**Container 30**
6/77
7/77-8/77
9/77-10/77
11/77
12/77
1/78
2/78

**Container 31**
3/78
4/78
5/78
6/78
7/78

**Correspondence - Subject:**

**Container 32**
Correspondence - Business
Correspondence - Christmas and Thanksgiving
Correspondence - Christmas Cards Requiring Personal Responses
Correspondence - Draft Dodgers
Correspondence - Economic Development
Correspondence - Education
Correspondence - Employment
Correspondence - Energy
Correspondence - Environment

**Container 33**
Correspondence - ERA
Correspondence - Ethnicity, Race
Correspondence - Handicapped
Correspondence - Health
Correspondence - Human Rights
Correspondence - International Affairs
Correspondence - Letters worth Reading
Correspondence - LGBT
Correspondence - Miscellaneous [1]
Correspondence - Miscellaneous [2]
Correspondence - “Nutty Letters”
Correspondence - Outgoing

**Container 34**
Correspondence - Peace
Correspondence - Personal Requests
Correspondence - Photo Requests
Correspondence - Random Letters [1]
Correspondence - Random Letters [2]
Correspondence - Random Letters, Angry
Correspondence - Random Letters, Personal [1]
Correspondence - Random Letters, Personal [2]

**Container 35**
Correspondence - Random Letters, Personal [3]
Correspondence - Random Letters, Personal [4]
Correspondence - Religious
Correspondence - Requests and Random Mail [1]
Correspondence - Requests and Random Mail [2]
Correspondence - Requests and Random Mail [3]
Correspondence - Support Letters [1]

**Container 36**
Correspondence - Support Letters [2]
Correspondence - Support Letters [3]
Correspondence - Support Letters [4]
Correspondence - Support Letters [5]
Correspondence - Support Letters [6]

**Container 37**
Correspondence - Support Letters [7]
Correspondence - Support Letters [8]
Correspondence - Support Letters [9]
Correspondence - Support Letters [10]
Correspondence - Thank You Letters [1]

**Container 38**
Correspondence - Thank You Letters [2]
Correspondence - Thank You Letters [3]
Correspondence - Thank You Letters for Speaking
Correspondence - Thank You Letters for White House Tours
Correspondence - Thank You, Requests, Favors
Correspondence - Urban Neighborhoods
Correspondence - Veterans
Correspondence - Women [1]

**Container 39**
Correspondence - Women [2]
Correspondence - Youth

[Return to series list]

**Midge Costanza’s Scheduling Files**

**Container 40**
1/13-19/77
1/20-21/77
1/25-30/77
2/1-15/77
2/16-24/77
2/25-28/77
3/1-4/77
3/5-9/77
3/10-11/77
3/12-14/77
3/15-18/77
3/19-20/77
3/21/77
3/22/77
3/23-25/77
3/26/77
3/27-28/77

Midge Costanza Papers
3/30/77
3/31/77
4/1-12/77

Container 41
4/13-14/77
4/15/77
4/16/77
4/17-22/77
4/23-25/77
4/26/77
4/27-28/77
4/29-30/77
5/1/77
5/2/77
5/3-4/77
5/5-8/77
5/9/77
5/10/77
5/11-12/77
5/13-17/77
5/18/77
5/19/77
5/20-21/77
5/22-23/77

Container 42
5/24/77
5/25/77
5/26/77
5/27-31/77
6/1-2/77
6/3-5/77
6/6-7/77
6/8/77
6/9/77
6/10/77
6/11/77
6/12/77
6/13-14/77
6/15/77
6/16/77
6/17/77
6/18/77
6/19/77
6/20/77
6/21-22/77
6/23/77
6/24/77
6/25/77
6/26/77
6/27/77
6/28/77
6/29/77
6/30/77
7/1-5/77
7/6/77
7/7/77
7/8/77
7/9-11/77
7/12/77
7/13/77
7/14/77
7/15/77
7/16-17/77

Container 43
7/18/77
7/19/77
7/20/77
7/21/77
7/22/77
7/23-25/77
7/26/77
7/27/77
7/28/77
7/29/77
7/30/77
8/1/77
8/2/77
8/3/77
8/4/77
8/5/77
8/6-8/77
8/9/77
8/10-12/77
8/13-15/77
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8/19-20/77
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8/23-24/77

Midge Costanza Papers
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11/1/77
11/2/77
11/3/77
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11/5-6/77
11/7/77
11/8/77
11/10/77
11/11/77

**Container 47**
11/13-14/77
11/15/77
11/16/77
11/17/77
11/18-19/77
11/20/77
11/21-23/77
11/28/77
11/29-30/77
12/1/77
12/2/77
12/3-6/77
12/7/77
12/8-13/77
12/14/77
12/15/77
12/16-25/77
1/3-6/78
1/9-10/78
1/11-17/78
1/18-24/78
1/25/78
1/26-27/78
1/28-31/78
2/1/78

**Container 48**
2/2/78
2/3-5/78
2/6-7/78
2/8-14/78
2/15-18/78
2/19-23/78
2/24-28/78
3/1-2/78

Midge Costanza Papers
3/3/78
3/4-5/78
3/6/78
3/7/78
3/8-9/78
3/10-11/78
3/12-14/78
3/15/78
3/16/78

Container 49
3/17/78
3/18-19/78
3/20-21/78
3/22/78
3/23-26/78
3/27/78
3/28-31/78
4/2-3/78
4/3-5/78
4/6-7/78
4/8-9/78
4/10-11/78
4/12-13/78

Container 50
4/15/78
4/16-19/78
4/20/78
4/21-28/78
4/29/78
5/1-8/78
5/7-13/78
5/9-16/78
5/17/78
5/18-19/78
5/20/78
5/21-29/78
5/31/78
6/1-3/78

Container 51
6/4-7/78
6/8-30/78
6/22-26/78
7/1-9/78

Midge Costanza Papers
Midge Costanza’s Office of Public Liaison Files

Container 52
Administration Legislation Push for Reorganization
Daily Activity Calendars, 10/77-12/77
Daily Activity Calendars, 1/78-3/78
Functions of the Office of Public Liaison
Meetings - Calendar of, 1/77-3/77
Meetings - Summary of
Midge’s Scheduling Requests - Trips, 8/77-10/77
Minutes of Staff Meetings, 4/77-9/77
Minutes of Staff Meetings, 10/77-2/78
Miscellaneous Other
Personnel

Container 53
Policies and Procedures
Records of Staff Meetings
Reorganization [1]
Reorganization [2]
Reorganization - Costanza’s Comments
Reorganization - Costanza’s Move out of the West Wing
Reorganization - Inter-department Task Force on Women
Reorganization - Letters
Reorganization - Memos
Reorganization - Press Remarks
Senior Staff - Agenda Reports
Staffing Reassignments and Relocations

Container 54
Summaries and Reports - Accomplishments [1]
Summaries and Reports - Accomplishments [2]
Summary of Meetings and Events, 1977
Weekly Reports, 2/77-3/77
Weekly Reports, 4/77
Weekly Reports, 5/77-6/77
Weekly Reports, 7/77
Weekly Reports, 8/77
Weekly Reports, 9/77-10/77
Weekly Reports, 11/77-12/77
Weekly Reports, 1/78
White House Internship Report

Return to series list

**Midge Costanza’s Invitation Files**

**Container 55**
1/77
2/77-3/77
4/77
4/77 - Regrets
5/77
5/77 - Regrets
6/77 [1]

**Container 56**
6/77 [2]
7/77-8/77
9/77
10/77 [1]
10/77 [2]
10/77 - Regrets

**Container 57**
11/77
11/77 - Regrets
12/77
1/78-4/78
5/78 [1]

**Container 58**
5/78 [2]
6/78-12/78
1/78 - Regrets
2/78 - Regrets [1]
2/78 - Regrets [2]
3/78 - Regrets
Container 59
4/78 - Regrets [1]
4/78 - Regrets [2]
4/78-5/78 - Regrets
5/78 - Regrets
6/78-8/78 - Regrets

Container 60
9/78-10/78 - Regrets
11/78 - Regrets
1979 - Regrets
Invitation Lists and Summaries of, 1977-1978
Invitation Lists and Summaries of, 1977-1978 - Phases 1-13
Invitations - Lists of Pending, 1978
Invitations - Not Filed

Container 61
Invitations - Open Dates [1]
Invitations - Open Dates [2]
Invitations - Open Dates [3]
Invitations - Open Dates [4]
Invitations - Outdated

Return to series list

Midge Costanza’s International Women’s Year Files

Container 62
Ad Hoc Coalition on Women’s Appointments
American Indians
Background Information
Budget
California Handbook
Carter’s First Eighteen Months - Status Report
Chicano Service Action Center
Chron File, 1/77-2/77
Chron File, 3/77-6/77
Chron File, 7/77-8/77
Chron File, 9/77
Chron File, 10/77

Container 63
Chron File, 11/77-12/77
Chron Files, 1/78-3/78
Chron File, 4/78-8/78
Church Women United
Commission Meeting Minutes
Congressional Clearing House on Women’s Issues
Delegate Information
Event Details
Federally Employed Women
Florida State Handbook
Follow-up - Draft
Follow-up - Miscellaneous
Info Sheets
Information from State Conferences
Massachusetts State Information
Members Lists [1]
Members Lists [2]
Memos
Midge’s Correspondence
Midge’s Speech - Letters on

**Container 64**
National Organization for Women (NOW)
National Plan of Action
National Women’s Political Caucus
National Women’s Political Caucus, 1977
National Women’s Political Caucus - Bella Abzug
New York State Information
News Releases
Notes, n.d.
Official Briefing Book
Opposing Letters and Hamilton Jordan’s Meeting Investigating Fundraising
Oppositional Media
Phone Calls

**Container 65**
Press Clippings
Press - Pre-Conference
Publication: “American Women, Today and Tomorrow”
Publication: “The Spirit of Houston” [1]
Publication: “To Form a More Perfect Union”
Radical News Articles - Feminists
Referrals and Resumes
Report to Congress
Rules and Regulations
Schedule of Events
Container 66
Speeches
State Handbooks for Legal Status of Homemakers
State Manuals
State Meetings
States and International Delegates
Status Report of the Carter Administration, 1978
Updates
Women - States
Women’s Agenda
Women’s Equity Action League (WEAL)
Women’s Network
Women’s Strike for Peace

Return to series list

Midge Costanza’s Women’s Issues Files

Container 67
Abzug, Bella - Appointment
Affirmative Action
Association of Lower East Side Settlements
Bert Lance
Carol Bellamy
Child Abuse
Child Care
Christian Right and other Religious Beliefs
Circumnavigator’s Club and President Carter
Civil Service Reform
Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA)
Convention for Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
Department of Women’s Affairs
Discrimination in Education and Employment
Discrimination in Employment

Container 68
Displaced Homemakers
Divorce Law Reform
Domestic Policy Council
Economic Stimulus
Employment
Energy Briefing for Women
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
Esther Peterson
Ethnic Women - Minorities
Federal Employees - Part Time
Federal Employment - Non-Discrimination
Federal Women’s Coordinators
Federal Women’s Program
Female Appointments
Female Appointments Poster
Female Presidential Appointments
Gender Budgeting
Hatch Act
Health
Health - Drug and Alcohol Abuse

**Container 69**
Hemispheric Center for Women
Housewives - Rights
Interdepartmental Task Force on Sex Discrimination
Interdepartmental Task Force on Women - Midge’s Speech at Democratic National Convention
International Women’s Year - Memorabilia
Labor Management - Collective Bargaining
League of Women
Legislation Affecting Women
Male and Female Presidential Appointments
Mary King - Memo
Ms. Magazine
National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL)
National Advisory Committee on Women (NACW)
NACW - Bella Abzug
NACW - Cancelled Meeting, 11/22/78
NACW - Executive Order
NACW - Meeting, 2/79

**Container 70**
NACW - Members List [1]
NACW - Members List [2]
NACW - Nominations
NACW - Nominations [1]
NACW - Nominations [2]
NACW - Nominations [3]
NACW - Nominations [4]
NACW - Notes, Suggestions - Members [1]

**Container 71**
NACW - Notes, Suggestions - Members [2]
NACW - Office of Public Liaison
NACW - Report to Press, 11/30/78
NACW - Report to Stuart Eizenstat, 12/20/78
NACW - Resumes [1]
NACW - Resumes [2]
National Commission on Working Women
National Federation of Democratic Women
Neighborhood Women
New York’s Programs
Panama Canal
Peace - Women Strike for Peace
Pregnancy Discrimination Act
Presidential Advisory Committee for Women
Privacy Protection for Victims Act

**Container 72**
Rural Women
San Diego State University Discrimination Letter
Sandy Adams
Sarah Weddington - Government Publications
Social Security
Specific Appointments
Sports
Task Force on Women Business Owners [1]
Task Force on Women Business Owners [2]
Traditional Women’s Groups
Welfare Reform
White House Conference on Families
Wives Receiving Benefits

**Container 73**
Women Athletes
Women Business Owners
Women Business Owners - Report of the President’s Interagency Task Force
Women in Banking
Women in Business - Background Material
Women in the Arts [1]
Women in the Arts [2]
Women in the Arts [3]
Women - New York Feminist Art Institute
Women USA Groups
Women’s Issues - After Midge Left White House Post
Women’s Issues - Miscellaneous

**Container 74**
Women’s Lobby
Working Women
Workshop Guide on International Women’s Year

[Return to series list]
Midge Costanza’s 1976 Campaign Files

Container 75
Becker, Laura
Bella Abzug - Press Articles
Campaign Promises
Campaign Schedule, 1975
Colleges in New York
Correspondence
Costanza’s Security Investigation
County Chairman and State Committee - New York
Democratic Platform
Districts and Delegates - New York
Electoral College
Feminist Press Articles
Fifty-one Percent Committee
Ford Record
Fundraising - New York

Container 76
Gays for Carter
Jennifer Wong - Cambridge Survey Research, New York
Jimmy Carter Biography
Midge Costanza’s Correspondence
Miscellaneous Campaign Material
New York - County Coordinators
New York - Information and Members Committees – Delegate Lists
New York - Issues
New York - Miscellaneous
New York - Operating Budget
New York - Organization
New York - Plans and Guidelines
New York - Press Releases
New York - Schedule of Campaign Events

Container 77
New York - Schedules and Information
Personal Letter from Hamilton Jordan to Midge Costanza
Position Statements
Primary Opposition - Birch Bayh
Responses to Editorials
Reports - Cambridge Research, Findings of New York Platform, 8/76
Speeches by Jimmy Carter
Speeches by Midge Costanza
Speeches - Miscellaneous
Women’s Issues